



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

REAR ADMIRAL JAMES D. HULL

ON THE

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE

STATE RECREATIONAL BOAT SAFETY GRANT PROGRAM

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND MARITIME

TRANSPORTATION

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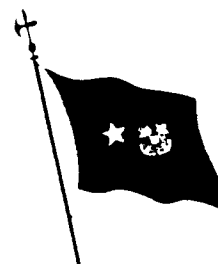
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 26, 1997



Rear Admiral James D. Hull Director of Operations Policy United States Coast Guard



Rear Admiral James D. Hull assumed the duties of Director of Operations Policy December 2, 1996, after 16 months of service in the Seventh District as Chief of Operations and then Chief of Staff. Rear Admiral Hull is a surface operations and management specialist with experience in the Atlantic, the Pacific and Caribbean.

A native of North Ridgeville, Ohio, Rear Admiral Hull earned a Bachelor of Science degree and was commissioned an Ensign at the Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut in 1969.

Rear Admiral Hull's first assignment was aboard the 378-foot, San Francisco, California based Cutter *RUSH*. Patrolling off the coast of Vietnam, *RUSH* was responsible for sinking two vessels being used to smuggle arms and ammunition into South Vietnam. Rear Admiral Hull's most recent command at sea was as skipper of the 378-foot Governor's Island, New York based Cutter *DALLAS*. While commanding *DALLAS* in the Caribbean he was responsible for directing the efforts of CTU 44.7, a task unit of cutters and aircraft patrolling of the coast of Haiti. Rear Admiral Hull's other assignments afloat include: Executive Officer, and later Commanding Officer of the Cutter *RED BIRCH* and Commanding Officer of the Cutter *ALERT*. During his tours at sea, Rear Admiral Hull was actively involved in fisheries law enforcement, counter narcotics operations, illegal migrant interdiction and maintenance of aids to navigation. Rear Admiral Hull's seagoing career culminated when he took the Cutter *DALLAS* to Europe to participate in the celebration commemorating the 50th anniversary of the invasion of Normandy.



Rear Admiral Hull was an assistant professor of mathematics at the Coast Guard Academy from 1974 until 1978. He was also the academy class of 1978 advisor and was an assistant Dean of Academics for one year. His other shore assignments include: Branch Chief for Programming, Planning, and Budgeting for the Training and Education Division at Coast Guard Headquarters; Branch Chief for the Coast Guard Budget Execution and Analysis Branch in the Coast Guard Chief of Staff's office; Assistant Chief and later Chief of Congressional and Governmental Affairs; and more recently as the Executive Director for the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator working directly for the Commandant of the Coast Guard.

Rear Admiral Hull earned a Masters Degree in Operations Research and Statistics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York; a Masters of Business Administration from the University of New Haven, Connecticut; and is a graduate of the National War College in Washington, D.C.

Rear Admiral Hull's awards include: three Legion of Merit Medals, two Meritorious Service Medals, Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V", a Coast Guard Commendation Medal, two Coast Guard Achievement Medals, a Coast Guard Commandant's Letter of Commendation Ribbon, and a Combat Action Ribbon.

Rear Admiral is married to the former Judith Ferris of East Hartford, Connecticut. They are the proud parents of two children: Jason and Jessica.

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before this distinguished committee today to discuss the value of the National Recreational Boating Safety Program and, in particular, the importance of Congressional action this year to reauthorize funding for the State Boating Safety Grant Program, which is vital to ensure the states' continued contributions and the success of our overall boating safety program.

Throughout our long history, safety in the marine environment has been one of the Coast Guard's traditional missions. Our people are very proud of their heritage as "The Lifesavers." As part of our multi-mission role to provide quality service to the American public, the Coast Guard is charged by law with coordinating a National Recreational Boating Safety Program. To accomplish this mission in the most effective manner, our experience has taught us we must utilize the talents and resources of many people, including state and local governments, volunteer organizations such as our own Coast Guard Auxiliary, and the private sector.

An estimated 76 million Americans – more than one-fourth of our nation's population – participate in some form of recreational boating each year, and spend more than \$17 billion for boats, accessories, safety equipment, maintenance, and associated products annually.

Unfortunately, recreational boating is second only to motor vehicles in transportation-related fatalities each year. In 1995, more than 800 people died in recreational boating accidents – up from our all-time low of 784 fatalities in 1994. As a result, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) continues to rank improvements in boating safety as one of its highest priorities.

But much is being done by both the Coast Guard and the states to get boating safety off of NTSB's "most wanted list," and that's what I will address today.

As the Federal component of the National Recreational Boating Safety (RBS) Program, the Coast Guard not only coordinates the states' efforts, but provides direct support and services to promote and ensure recreational boater safety.

The Coast Guard's direct operational involvement in recreational boating safety has many facets that include, but are not limited to –

- ◆ a search and rescue (SAR) infrastructure that, in 1996, saved nearly 5,000 lives, assisted more than 90,000 people, and saved property worth more than \$2 billion. This infrastructure includes 24-hour on-call search and rescue stations; aircraft; command, control and communications; and, Coast Guard cutters and boats.
- ◆ a law enforcement program that routinely boards recreational boats and ensures compliance with numerous Federal boating safety laws, such as boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs, safety equipment requirements, and reckless operation; and educates boaters on important safety issues;

- ◆ maintaining safe waterways with over 50,000 Federal aids to navigation and management of an additional 50,000 private aids to navigation;
- ◆ establishing and enforcing manufacturing standards for recreational vessels, including about 100 defect campaigns each year; and
- ◆ administering the marine event permitting program as a waterway management tool to ensure the safety of all waterway users.

As an important member of Team Coast Guard, the dedicated people of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, whose primary focus is the safety of fellow recreational boaters, saved the lives of approximately 400 boaters in 1995 through their boating safety air and surface patrols and search and rescue operations. In 1996, these 34,000 civilian volunteers also conducted boating safety education classes for nearly 565,000 people, performed approximately 174,000 courtesy marine examinations (safety inspections), and conducted approximately 42,000 marine dealer visits to promote boating safety. An important new addition to the Auxiliary's wide range of educational programs is a new course developed specifically for the personal watercraft community. This is only a sampling of the many activities the Auxiliary performs in support of boating safety.

In the Coast Guard's specific role as coordinator of the National RBS program, we have increased our boating safety awareness program by expanding the annual National Safe Boating Week into a year-long campaign, with special emphasis around peak boating activity periods such as Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Labor Day. Our primary theme for both 1996 and 1997 – "Lifejackets: They float. You don't." – seems very basic to those of us in the boating safety business. But, tragically, too many boaters don't understand their importance since three-

1997 – “Lifejackets: They float. You don’t.” – seems very basic to those of us in the boating safety business. But, tragically, too many boaters don’t understand their importance since three-fourths of boating fatality victims drown because they aren’t wearing a lifejacket. We have to continue to get this important safety message out.

A related Coast Guard effort to encourage increased use of lifejackets – technically called personal flotation devices, or PFDs – is approval of more comfortable inflatable PFDs that meet Coast Guard safety standards to comply with regulations to carry certain lifejackets on board vessels. Because many people complain that traditional lifejackets are too bulky and uncomfortable, we are hopeful Coast Guard-approved inflatable PFDs will result in more people wearing them at all times while operating their boats.

A major segment of our National RBS Program supports the educational efforts of numerous groups that also promote boating safety. Each year, the states, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadrons, the U.S. Sailing Association, and the American Canoe Association conduct more than 40,000 classes with more than 975,000 students receiving various levels of boating safety education. If the boating safety education efforts of the many other Federal, state, local and private sector groups involved in the program were included, the total number of students reached in a one-year period would easily exceed one million. Despite this dedicated effort, we are still collectively only impacting one percent of the recreational boaters with boating safety classes. The states will need additional funding to expand these important efforts.

We are taking advantage of new technologies in a number of areas, including development of the Vessel Identification System, which will allow state and Federal officials to easily obtain information about state-numbered and Coast Guard-documented vessels; our electronic data transfer project for states to send their boating accident reports to the Coast Guard; and greatly increased utilization of the Internet to communicate with the states, our other partners, and the general public, in making boating safety information readily available to the growing segment of the public who are "surfing the web."

In addition, funding made available to the Coast Guard from the Boat Safety Account for grants to national nonprofit public service organizations has made possible numerous boating safety initiatives through a wide range of organizations. I would like to provide you with several examples today.

The increasing signs of user conflicts on our waterways made the theme of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators' conference last year – "Sharing the Waterways" – most appropriate. We all understand the need to balance recreational, commercial, and environmental interests in our stewardship of the nation's waterways. To help facilitate this delicate process, the Coast Guard provided funding for development of a multi-use waterway management planning guide under a nonprofit grant to the National Water Safety Congress.

Last April, the Coast Guard held a joint meeting of our National Boating Safety Advisory Council and the Navigation Safety Advisory Council to identify issues of joint concern to both

recreational boaters and commercial operators. This was the first – but we trust not the last – joint meeting of these two important Coast Guard advisory groups. Notably, these groups focused on education as the most fundamental concern and need in waterway safety. This includes reaching all users and hearing all viewpoints.

A few years ago, we established an Interagency Committee on Waterway Management (ICWWM), with high-level representation of numerous Federal agencies involved in waterway management. About the same time, our boating program staff, with the help of the states and others, established a working-level group to improve Federal agency coordination on recreational boating issues. Although the ICWWM originally focused on commercial vessel issues, they have now adopted the recreational boating group as a subcommittee to identify issues that cross the commercial/recreational spectrum.

In addition, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Canadian Coast Guard have joined forces to develop a North American Standard of Care for Recreational Boating Safety. This standard will take into consideration such elements as education standards, learning and behavioral objectives, and operator proficiencies, and will focus on various forms of reciprocity in regard to certification, equipment and multi-location user requirements.

As the boating population continues to grow, it is imperative that all available resources – Federal, state, local, and private sector – are tapped to address boating safety problems. Toward that end, we have expanded our efforts for partnering with additional organizations and the private sector. One example is the National Recreational Boating Safety Coalition, an

also includes the National Safe Kids Campaign and Mothers Against Drunk Driving, as well as the traditional boating safety organizations.

Recently, we teamed with Metropolitan Property and Casualty (Met P&C) Insurance Company, a subsidiary of Met Life, to promote safety on the water through development of a boating safety information booklet. The Coast Guard provided boating safety material, which Met P&C produced and distributed at no cost to the public. We are delighted that characters from Charles Schulz's popular "Peanuts" cartoon strip are featured on the cover. More importantly, the success of the booklet has resulted in Mr. Schulz also approving their use in the 1997 boating safety campaign. Snoopy's four-day appearance on behalf of the Coast Guard at the recent Miami International Boat Show was a huge success, and we are grateful to both Mr. Schulz and Met P&C for this invaluable contribution to our boating safety awareness campaign and youth outreach efforts.

One nonprofit grant to the United Safe Boating Institute produced a video safety course covering fundamental aspects of operating a personal watercraft in a safe, courteous manner. Two other nonprofit grants developed interactive courses on general boating safety fundamentals that will be available on CD-Rom. These courses can be used for study at home or through classroom instruction.

There are many other examples of such efforts. However, despite all our successes, there still is much to be done. One critical component of the National Recreational Boating Safety Program is the State Recreational Boating Safety Grant Program, which provides essential safety

Program is the State Recreational Boating Safety Grant Program, which provides essential safety services to the boating public. The states are the cornerstone of the Coast Guard's National Boating Safety Program coordination efforts, and the state grant program is essential to the continued success of the overall boating safety program. In addition to working closely with the Coast Guard in areas of joint jurisdiction, the states are the primary providers of boating safety services to millions of boaters on inland waters where there are no active duty Coast Guard facilities, or on internal state waters where the Coast Guard does not have jurisdiction.

More importantly, this program is an excellent example of "user pays/user benefits" as it is funded entirely from Federal excise taxes on gasoline attributable to motorboat use. No general tax revenues are involved. By returning a portion of the Federal fuel taxes paid by boaters to this important safety program, the states receive needed resources for law enforcement, search and rescue, boater education, numbering of undocumented vessels, aids to navigation, and public access.

When asked in the Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971 to assume a larger share of responsibility for boating safety program activities, the states responded in an exemplary manner and have significantly increased their own boating safety efforts. State expenditures for boating safety are currently more than five times the amount of funds they receive through the grant program. This is truly an outstanding example of governments at all levels working together for the benefit of the public we serve. This cooperative effort has directly resulted in safer boating for the millions of American boaters we all are charged with protecting.

While I'm confident the states will provide many more examples of the value of the grant program, and the need for equitable funding, I want to discuss a few of the initiatives those funds have supported that we in the Coast Guard consider particularly notable.

In 1995, state personnel boarded more than 1 million vessels for boating safety checks and conducted 11,000 boater safety education classes with 379,000 students. Many of the state personnel have been trained through the Coast Guard's National Boating Safety Instructor Course at our Reserve Training Center in Yorktown, Virginia.

Maryland was the first state to establish a mandatory boater education program, and Alabama was the first to require licensing of vessel operators based on a demonstrated knowledge of basic boating safety principles. Numerous other states have followed their lead by seeking mandatory boater education and some are seeking to license vessel operators – similar to requirements for driver education and licensing.

Boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs (BUI) – like drunk driving – is a serious problem. Many states are emphasizing “Boat Sober” campaigns, and states without adequate laws to address drunk boating are seeking stronger laws providing blood alcohol content levels and implied consent provisions similar to those widely accepted for drunk driving. Using data demonstrating that drunk boaters frequently have records as drunk drivers, some states have been successful in getting legislation to link BUI convictions to the operator's driver's license.

To assist in this focus on BUI, the Coast Guard has developed a second theme being unveiled this year for our nationwide boating awareness campaign – “Stay Afloat. Don’t Booze and Boat.” – that will also be available for use by the states. In addition, a nonprofit grant was awarded to the National Safety Council for development of a 50-minute presentation that discusses the “ills” of BUI, and provides recommended behavioral intervention strategies. This video will be used both as a stand-alone presentation to groups on just the BUI issue and incorporated as a segment in a broad boater education course.

One of the most effective deterrents to drunk boating or reckless operation of vessels is a highly visible presence of marine patrol officers on the water. This has been demonstrated time and again by the states. But the cost of personnel and equipment required to maintain this presence is extremely high. Federal funds provided through the state RBS grant program ensure states have the resources necessary to continue their “on the water” presence.

As part of its very aggressive boating safety program, Minnesota has developed numerous Public Service Announcements (PSAs) that they have generously permitted other states to use. The quality of these PSAs is evident in the nomination of the creator, Tim Smalley, for a “CLIO” Award – the advertising equivalent of an “Oscar” or an “Emmy.” Another initiative, the “PFD Panda” program, designed to encourage children to wear their lifejackets, also has been adopted by numerous other states and the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Both the states and the Coast Guard view education of our youth as an important lifesaving initiative. Mr. Smalley and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources are to be congratulated on their

efforts, and their willingness to share their creative talents with the rest of the boating community.

Several states have sent boating safety videos targeting personal watercraft (PWC) operators to all PWC owners in their states and others are taking specific steps, such as operator age restrictions and mandatory education, to address PWC issues. These efforts are very important in light of the explosion in sales of PWCs and the number of deaths and injuries resulting from their improper use.

The states are working with us to improve boating accident data collection. This information is critical in identifying ways to improve delivery of boating safety programs to the public. Recreational boating fatalities took a sharp rise in 1995 to 844 – up from an all-time low of 784 in 1994. And from what we've heard from some states, 1996 may be even worse. Most important for all of us is determining why this is happening. Better collection of accident data will help us do this. One effort that contributes to this endeavor is grants to Underwriters Laboratories for the past several years to develop and conduct accident investigator training seminars for state boating personnel. In addition, while we believe we are receiving most of the reports of boating safety deaths, we estimate the public reports less than five percent of the accidents that result in injury or property damage. The Coast Guard is working directly with the states to identify ways to encourage increased accident reporting by the public.

Continued funding of the state grant program is necessary to provide funding for the states' need to maintain patrols on the water and to develop new, innovative education efforts.

These two facets of state boating safety programs are critical and can most directly help us get boating fatalities on a downward slope again. We know that enforcement and education are the two areas where we can save lives and reduce injuries - with continued funding, the states can increase resources to these target areas and save lives.

Last year was the 25th anniversary of the enactment of the Federal Boat Safety Act of 1971, which first established the State Boating Safety Grant Program. We cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of the states' contributions to the success of the boating safety program. For that reason, the Commandant of the Coast Guard presented to the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators' (NASBLA), as the representative of the thousands of personnel in all the states and territories that participate in the boating safety program, the Coast Guard Distinguished Public Service Award at the NASBLA conference in Pittsburgh last September. This is the highest award that the Commandant can present on behalf of the Coast Guard, and it is not given lightly. The states certainly have earned it.

The Coast Guard and the states have a strong and productive working relationship of which we both are proud. We are committed to not only continuing – but strengthening – that relationship. While the Coast Guard has worked closely with NASBLA ever since the organization was founded in 1960, there apparently had never been a document defining our relationship. Just last month, the Commandant and the President of NASBLA signed a Memorandum of Understanding that is meant to ensure this successful partnership continues into the 21st century.

We have made great strides, but our job is not over. As more and more people look to our waterways to escape from the stress of daily life, it will become increasingly important to ensure that funding is available to provide essential services to this large – and growing – segment of the American population.

The states' role, as supported by the boaters themselves through their motorboat fuel taxes, is a critical and essential program. Our combined efforts are truly greater than the sum of the parts, and we are working hard to ensure that our boating safety services are complementary of each other, not redundant.

Most importantly, we – both the Coast Guard and the states – reaffirm our mutual commitment to the safety of the American boating public in the future. In summation, we want to reduce deaths on the water, remove drunk and drugged boaters, educate people on responsible vessel operation – particularly PWCs – and encourage PFD use. That's our job. Working together, and with help of this Committee and the Congress, we will ensure that job is done to the best of our ability.